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RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY

RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ABUJA 002027

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL, INR/AA;
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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN NUGGETS -- NOVEMBER 6, 2009

REF: A. ABUJA 1996

1B. ABUJA 0968

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Jeffery A. Salaiz
for reasons in Sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) Mission Nigeria provides the following compilation of recent political, economic, and social developments not previously reported.

NIGERIA'S ECOWAS PRIORITIES

12. (SBU) Nigerian Foreign Ministry (MFA) Director Felix Pwol, who oversees Nigerian relations with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), told PolOffs November 4 that Nigeria's priorities for ECOWAS involved implementing a 35-percent regional tariff on iron and steel, launching the new ECOWAS prototype design for joint border posts in 2010, and stabilizing democratic governments in the region. To change Nigerian perceptions about ECOWAS, Pwol has proposed a weekly television program on key ECOWAS issues. He lamented that the Nigerian military and civil society lacked "capacity building" skills and regional "legislative arms" remained weak oversight and separation of powers. On Guinea, Pwol spoke hypothetically about the need for a military observation force, adding that this personal opinion did not necessarily reflect GON policy. A career foreign service officer, Pwol previously served in Vienna, Austria (1982); Caracas, Venezuela; the Democratic Republic of Congo (1993-1997); and Washington, D.C. (2003-2006), where he served as director of political and administrative affairs, before assuming his present position in 2007.

MEDIA SENSATIONALIZED PORT HARCOURT "PANIC"

13. (U) During a Defense-Ministry sponsored visit to the Port Harcourt waterfront area slated for urban renewal, Defense Attaché observed no signs of panic or unruly crowds November, despite press reporting one day earlier about civil unrest. Police and military contacts denied civil unrest over demolition of houses and spoke positively about improving that area of the city. They claimed authorities compensated property owners by purchasing their land for a commercial project. (COMMENT: We will continue to monitor this and

other instances where citizens' rights may be affected by evictions and lack of due process. END COMMENT.)

BAUCHI CLAIMS TO HAVE "UNCOVERED" PLOTS

¶ 14. (C) Bauchi State Governor Isa Yuguda told journalists November 4 that his administration had "uncovered" plans to cause a crisis involving ethno-religious and political conflicts. He said he had briefed security personnel on plotters' plans and meeting places. Yuguda's announcement followed similar claims by Plateau state officials within the past two weeks (Ref A). Jos interlocutors alleged that politicians made such claims to seek political attention and elicit additional security measures. Military, academic, and civil society contacts told PolOffs November 5 that they saw no signs of instability or violence. Similarly, Bauchi Ono signs of instability or violence. Similarly, Bauchi residents reported that Yuguda's claim came as a surprise, as they had observed no signs of crisis. Bauchi Radio correspondent Usman Sambo told PolOff November 5 that Yuguda likely made the announcement to impress upon certain individuals that they remained under surveillance, asserting that the Governor had already prohibited protests to limit complaints against his administration.

U.S. OUTREACH IN BORNO STATE

¶ 15. (SBU) Religious leaders, government officials, and

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academics praised recent visits by U.S. officials to Maiduguri, Borno State, including one by the Ambassador earlier this year, which Maiduguri University Mass Communication Professor Dr. Gambo commended as "promoting understanding and respect between our cultures." He cautioned, however, that misunderstandings and doubts continued over the U.S. role in Afghanistan, with Nigerian youth remaining skeptical of U.S. foreign policy. He suggested sports as an avenue for engagement to complement support for university infrastructure, such as radio stations, publications, and student centers. Religious Affairs Director Alhaji Muhammad Abdullahi told PolOffs a "vacuum of ideas" existed among Nigerian youth and claimed that students who studied in Saudi Arabia returned with "extreme ideas" and became problems. He suggested the only way to counter such ideology was through democracy and creation of a counter culture. Similarly, conservative Sufi imam Sheikh Fatahi asserted that graduates from Saudi Arabia, unlike those from Egypt, caused problems after returning to Nigeria.

NIGERIAN FISHERMEN DRIVEN OUT OF BAKASSI

¶ 16. (U) Cross River Youth Assembly Dr. Theo Onyuko told PolOff November 2 that Cameroonian gendarmes drove roughly 100 Nigerian fishermen out of Bakassi, while the men had fished in their "traditional" waters off the Bakassi peninsula, which Cameroon gained from Nigeria in August 2008 as a result of an International Court of Justice ruling. While no casualties occurred, Onyuko said the fishermen fled to a "refugee" camp and remained reluctant to return to fishing.

ECONOMY POISED FOR RECOVERY

¶ 17. (U) Financial Derivatives Company Chief Executive Officer Bismarck Rewane told Lagos Business School meeting participants November 3 that the Nigerian Economy remained poised for recovery, although risks of slipping into steep

recession persisted. He said recovery would depend on a surge in oil prices and production, although contraction stemming from a credit squeeze could continue to stunt economic activities until year-end 2009. Rewane cited International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that projected a strong recovery by the second quarter of 2010, including five-percent growth in gross domestic product based on oil production of 2.11 million barrels per day in 2010. Rewane, however, faulted IMF's projection that the Excess Crude Account and external reserves would grow to 20.6 billion dollars and 44.1 billion dollars, respectively, with government spending likely to increase during the year heading into Nigeria's 2011 national elections.

¶8. (U) Rewane said Nigeria's real estate market continued a sharp decline in value in October. In the third quarter, luxury apartments' rents in Ikoyi and Victoria Island, Lagos, dropped by 38 percent from 80,000 dollars to 50,000 dollars per annum. Prices of undeveloped plots in the Banana Island area of Ikoyi, Lagos, have stabilized at 125 million naira. Areas of Ikoyi, Lagos, have stabilized at 125 million naira (about 830,000 dollars), after a huge decline from a high of 250 to 300 million naira (about 1.67)2 million dollars) in 2008, Rewane said.

DELTA AIRLINES EXECUTIVES VISIT

¶9. (U) Delta Airlines top management for Africa traveled to Lagos the week of November 2 to assess first hand the challenges and opportunities for Delta in Nigeria. Delta currently plans a non-stop Abuja-New York (John F. Kennedy Airport) connection during the summer only. The airline would need to educate passengers to plan well ahead in applying for visas, which could increase the number of visas granted and improve passenger rates.

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NEW GAS PARTNERSHIP TARGETS DOMESTIC MARKET

¶10. (U) According to the operator of the largest Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) Facility in West Africa, Navgas, current demand for gas in Nigeria is low due to inefficient pricing -- end prices for gas have been too low to make the domestic market attractive to producers. (N.B.: Demand in Nigeria amounts to only 20 metric tons (MT), compared to Ghana with 85 MT, Senegal with 150 MT, and Morocco with 1,575 MT END NOTE.) Anticipating an increase in the end-price for gas, Navgas formed a new partnership with Nidogas, a Nigerian company specializing in gas cylinder filling and distribution, and Algasco, a company working with Nigerian LNG Limited to eliminate bottlenecks in transferring LPG from production terminals to storage facilities. This partnership enables Navgas to cover upstream, midstream, and downstream activities in Nigeria. The partnership claims to be able to lower LPG freight costs from 170 dollars to 60 dollars per MT. This cost savings, combined with increased end-prices, would make retail distribution of gas in Nigeria profitable. Navgas also advocated regulations to standardize cylinder valves and "pioneer" tax treatment for their operations.

SESAME STREET LAUNCH

¶11. (U) New York Sesame Workshop staff visited Nigeria October 23 to November 2 as part the Sesame Street Nigeria launch. Key events included a reception attended by USAID Mission Director and a curriculum development workshop with local counterparts. Earlier this year, USAID and Sesame Workshop completed a one-million dollar pilot program, which produced five short videos using live-action footage from

various locations in Nigeria and animation sequences of Kami (an HIV-positive Muppet) and Big Bird. The video segments focused on issues relevant to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), including how to deal with stigma, what to expect when going for a medical check-up, and personal grief. Program staff also produced a Care Givers Guide and Student Work Book to provide opportunities to reflect on lessons from the video segments and initiate pre-learning skills (such as letter-color-number recognition, counting, and letter recognition). Non-governmental organizations used these materials to implement PEPFAR OVC programs in Nigeria, which according to preliminary evaluation data, successfully transferred knowledge and awareness on HIV issues and changed attitudes on HIV within the OVC audience. A new, five-year grant for 6.6 million dollars awarded June 2009 will substantially expand development of educational components to address key themes in health, education, and HIV/AIDS. The OVC program in Nigeria will more widely engage Kami and Big Bird, use new and former materials within non-formal and early-grade, formal education settings, and create three seasons of a Sesame Street Nigeria television program (to run daily, five times weekly).

USAID TO PARTICIPATE IN NET DISTRIBUTION
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¶12. (U) The Global Fund signed a Round Eight 285 million-dollar grant agreement with the GON October 28 to support malaria control activities. A major portion of the agreement will involve the purchase of long-lasting, insecticidal nets (LLINs). USAID, in partnership with other donors, will distribute two LLINs per household to Nigeria's 150 million people by the end of 2010. This net distribution campaign, the largest in Nigeria's history, should substantially reduce malaria in the country, which suffers from the world's largest number of malaria cases and deaths. USAID previously provided assistance to over nine million Nigerians (Ref B).

MEN ENCOURAGED TO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY

¶13. (U) Seven hundred men, including local government

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officials and community service organization representatives, gathered October 21 in Kebbi state to discuss male involvement in maternal and child health and to promote better understanding and use of HIV-AIDS prevention, care, and treatment services in western Nigeria. This simple, but revolutionary, program encouraged men to join women in taking responsibility for the health of women and children.

¶14. (U) Embassy Abuja and Consulate General Lagos collaborated on this telegram.

SANDERS